PART III

Four Places of Principal Miracles

Contents

1. Savatthi, Place of the Twin Miracle

1.1 How to reach there

Savatthi or Sravasti is located in the Bahraich district of Uttar Pradesh, 160 km east of the capital Lucknow. The site is 21 km west of **Balrampur,** a station on the Gorakhpur-Gonda line of the North-Eastern Railway. All distances are approximate.

1.2 Religious Significance [3, 25]

Sravasti was the ancient capital of the Kingdom of **Kosala** ruled by **King Pasenadi,** a lay disciple and great admirer of the Buddha. It owes its fame to its long and close association with the Buddha's ministry. Of the 45 years of his ministry, the Buddha spent as many as 25 rains-retreats, 24 of them continuously (21st- 44th) at Sravasti. It was here that the millionaire **Sudatta**, popularly known as **Anathapindika** or "Feeder of the Poor", donated the famous **Jetavana** or **Jeta's Grove** to the Buddha after he had bought it at an exorbitant price, which was "as many gold coins as would cover it". Since the Buddha spent a major part of his missionary life in Sravasti, the majority of sermons in the scriptures were delivered while staying in Jetavana. Another important monastery at Sravasti was the **Pubbarama**, donated by **Lady Visakha**, chief benefactress of the Buddha.

The story of how Anathapindika came to meet the Buddha is narrated in *Vinaya Cullavagga Kh*. IV, 4. It was after the third rainy season that Anathapindika visited his brother-in-law while on business in Rajagaha. Instead of the usual hearty welcome, he found the latter busy in the backyard making preparations for a feast. On enquiring, he was told that the preparations were for entertaining the Buddha and *Sangha* the next day. Just hearing the word 'Buddha' aroused great joy in Anathapindika and he longed to see the Buddha. As he was told that the Buddha was staying in the Sitavana forest in the neighbourhood and that he could see the Buddha the next day, he

went to sleep. His thoughts were so bent upon the Buddha that thrice that night he arose thinking that it was dawn. It seems that owing to his great faith in the Buddha, light emanated from his body making him think that it was dawn. He went to the Sivaka gate and as soon as he was out of the city, the light left him. It was pitched dark and fear arose in him. He thought of turning back but the Yakkha Sivaka himself invisible, urged him on. His fear vanished, light appeared again and he continued his journey. For a second and third time the same thing happened and the Yakkha likewise encouraged him on. Then he arrived at the Cool Grove where the Buddha was. At that time, the Buddha had risen at early dawn and was pacing up and down in the open. When he saw Anathapindika coming, the Buddha addressed him by his family name 'Sudatta', and called him to his presence. Anathapindika was pleased to hear the Buddha address him by this name as no one other than his family members knew it. After paying obeisance to the Buddha and hearing the *Dhamma*, he became a *Sotapanna*. Thereupon he invited the Buddha to spend the rainy season in Savatthi.

Sravasti became an important place of pilgrimage because here the Buddha performed the greatest miracle of all, the Twin Miracle (*Yamaka Pathihariya*), in order to dispel the heretics. In a series of miraculous episodes, the Buddha created multiple representations of Himself, seated and standing on lotuses, causing fire and water to emanate from his body. This marvelous event, called the **Miracle of Sravasti**, is a favourite subject of Buddhist sculptures.

1.3 Historical Background [5, 27]

King Asoka visited Sravasti in 249 BC as part of his pilgrimage to the holy Buddhist shrines and erected two pillars, each 70 feet high, on both sides of the eastern gate of Jetavana, as well as some *stupas* to enshrine the relics of the Buddha. During the time of the Kusana kings, **Kaniska** and **Huviska,** in the 1st- 2nd century AD, new shrines were installed to enshrine Buddha images which were becoming popular at the time.

When Fa Hsien visited Sravasti in 407 AD, Buddhism had declined in the city but Jetavana was still occupied by monks. He saw the two Asokan pillars still standing but the *stupas* of Angulimala and Sudatta were in ruins. By the time Hsüan Tsang came to Sravasti in 637 AD, the main city was in ruins and there were several hundreds of *sangharamas*, mostly in ruin with very few religious followers. Jetavana was decayed and deserted. He also saw both columns erected by Asoka, the ruins of *stupas, sangharamas* and the well from which the Buddha used to draw water for his use. After Hsüan Tsang's visit, Jetavana was again occupied, as evidenced by the recovery of seals and images of Mahayanist pantheons such as Lokanatha, Avalokitesvara and others belonging to the 8th and 9th centuries AD. The last patrons of Jetavana were **King Govindachandra** and his devout Buddhist wife **Kumaradevi** of Kanauj and Benares (1130 AD). Records of their gift of six villages to the *Sangha* of Jetavana monastery were found in a copper charter discovered during excavation of the ruins. With the downfall of Buddhism in India in the 13th century AD, the Jetavana shrines became deserted and fell into oblivion.

In 1863, **Cunningham** identified a vast collection of twin ruins called **Sahet-Mahet** with the ancient city of Sravasti. He excavated the ruins at Sahet covering 13 hectares, identified with Jetavana and exposed the remains of several *stupas*, temples and monasteries, including the site of the famous **Gandha-kuti** or Perfumed Chamber as well as the **Kosambi *kuti***, both used by the Buddha. Most of the ruins exposed in Jetavana were from the Kusana period (1st- 2nd century AD). The ruins at Mahet are very extensive, spreading over 162 hectares. Only a few ruins have been identified while most parts of it are still unexplored.

In recent times, the first monastery to be built in Sravasti was the Burmese ***Vihara,*** at the initiative of Ven. **Chandramani** of Kushinagar. Ven. **Ren Chen** followed his example and founded the Chinese Buddhist Temple. In 1969, the Maha Bodhi Society of India became directly involved with Sravasti with the arrival of Ven. **Sangharatana** of Sarnath, who initiated the construction of the Nava Jetavana Vihara just outside the old Jetavana. In 1982, the Thais too, established a *vihara* in Sravasti.

1.4 Objects of Interest [5, 27]

a) Jetavana Park

During the Buddha's time, the place was called *Jetavana Anathapindika Arama* or Anathapindika's Garden of Jeta Grove. Today most of the ruins are the remains of temples and *stupas* from the Kusana period (1st-2nd century AD). There are several stupas built in memory of the Great Disciples of the Buddha such as the Venerables Sariputta, Mogallana, Sivali, Ananda and Rahula scattered all over Jetavana. The important shrines are:

- **Temple No. 2**

The ruins here mark the site of the ***Gandha-kuti*** (Perfumed Chamber) built by Anathapindika for the Buddha's use. According to the commentaries, the site of the Buddha's bed in it is the same for all Buddhas, irrespective of the size of the *Gandha-kuti*. The original *Gandha-kuti* was wooden but by the time the Chinese pilgrims saw it, the structure was a two-storied brick building in a ruinous condition. Now only the low walls and stone platform are extant. This is a favourite site for pilgrims to pay homage to the Triple Gem (*puja*) and meditate.

- **Temple No. 3**

This temple is believed to be the site of the original **Kosambi *kuti,*** also built by Anathapindika earlier for the Buddha's use as a meditation room. Just in front of it is a long plinth, made of bricks, marking the site of the original promenade (*cankama*) used by the Buddha for walking meditation.

- **Stupa H**

This *stupa* is believed to mark the place where the Buddha used to preach to the monks and laity. It was erected in front of the *Gandha-kuti* Temple and was rebuilt several times, pointing to its importance as a sacred shrine.

b) Ananda Bodhi Tree

The Ananda *Bodhi* tree is located near the entrance of Jetavana. It was planted at the request of Anathapindika so that the laity would have an object to worship during the Buddha's absence from Savatthi to propagate the *Dhamma* after each *vassa*. When Ven. Ananda reported the matter to the Buddha, the latter replied that there were **three types of objects of veneration**, namely: the corporeal relic deposited in a *stupa* after the Buddha's *Parinibbana*, an object used by the Buddha such as his alms-bowl, etc., and a visible symbol such as a *Dhammacakka* wheel.

The first was not possible while the Buddha was alive, while the third object was not appropriate for those who were not content with a mere symbol or picture. So only the second remained and the Buddha suggested the *Bodhi* tree as the best object to venerate in his absence. So it was decided to plant a small shoot of the *Bodhi* tree from Bodhgaya and Ven. Moggallana, foremost in psychic ability, was assigned the task of obtaining the sapling. When it arrived, the young shoot was ceremoniously planted at the gate of Jetavana by Anathapindika. The tree grew and became an object of veneration to the laity. At the request of Ven Ananda, the Buddha spent one night meditating under it, adding sanctity to the tree. The present tree looks very old from its hoary appearance but it is not possible to confirm whether it is the original tree or a descendant of it.

c) Sudatta Stupa

North of Jetavana, in the ruins of Mahet (old Sravasti) stands the **Sudatta *stupa***, the most imposing monument in the area. According to Fa Hsien, this *stupa* was built on the foundations of the house of Sudatta, popularly known as Anathapindika. The ruins show structural remains from the 1st to the 12th centuries AD. From the road, one has to climb up several flights of steps to reach the plinth, where one can see the sunken basements of two circular *stupas*.

d) Angulimala Stupa

Near the Sudatta *stupa* in Mahet, is a mass of bricks with a tunnel in the middle, identified by Cunningham as the **Angulimala *stupa*** seen by the Chinese pilgrims. The tunnel was cut through the whole mound at the base by the Archaeological Survey of India to serve as a drain for floodwaters during the rainy season, helping to preserve the monument. According to Fa Hsien, the *stupa* marks the site where Angulimala was cremated. Locals often mistake the tunnel for a cave and will tell visitors that it is Angulimala's cave.

e) *Stupa* of the Great Miracle

According to the commentaries, the Buddha ascended to *Tavatimsa* Heaven to preach to his mother during the seventh rains-retreat. Prior to his ascent, he had performed the **Twin Miracle** and other miraculous feats to silence the heretics at a place where the gardener **Ganda** had planted a mango tree. This place is believed to be at the top of a hillock near the Nikko Lotus Hotel as one enters Sravasti.

When the author first visited the place in 1991, it appeared like a natural hill covered with trees, creepers and bushes. At that time, Sayadaw U Awbatha, abbot of the Burmese Vihara mentioned that it was an important stupa. In the year 2000, excavations were carried out on this hillock, which revealed the remains of a brick *stupa* believed to be erected by King Asoka. The area has now been fenced up to protect the ruins of the Miracle *stupa* on top of the hillock. This *stupa* is known locally as '**Orajhar**'.

f) Place where Devadatta Sank into the Earth

According to the *Dhammapada* commentary, after Devadatta created a schism in the *Sangha*, he left to form his own faction. Thereafter his fortune took a turn for the worst and eventually he fell sick for nine months. Knowing his end was near, he instructed his disciples

to carry him to Jetavana to see the Buddha for the last time. When the Buddha heard about this, he predicted that Devadatta would not succeed in seeing him at all. As Devadatta was being carried in a litter, they passed a lotus pond outside Jetavana. Putting the litter down, his disciples went into the lotus pond to bathe. Devadatta arose from his litter and sat down, resting both feet on the ground whereupon his feet sank into the earth. By degrees he sank into the earth, first to his ankles, then to the knees, then to the hips, then to the chest and then to the neck. Before he was completely swallowed by the earth, he managed to verbally take refuge in the Buddha. Thereafter he was reborn in *Avici* Hell to suffer for his bad *kamma*. The place where Devadatta sank into the earth is believed to be the swampy area behind the old Burmese *Vihara*.

g) Burmese and Sri Lankan Monasteries

Pilgrims visiting Sravasti should visit both monasteries to pay their respects to the monks and find out more about the monuments from them. The Sri Lankan monastery is named **Nava (New) Jetavana Vihara** and inside it one can see beautiful murals on its walls depicting important events in the Buddha's life. The monastery also possesses some Buddha relics, which it keeps in a *stupa*-shaped vessel to show to visiting pilgrims. The Burmese *vihara* is named the Burmese Buddhist Temple and the abbot is the Venerable **Sayadaw U Awbatha**. According to the Sayadaw, although the temple is situated outside the fenced-up Jetavana Park, its precincts were once part of the old Jetavana grove and no construction is allowed there. So a new Burmese *vihara* has been recently constructed at another site and now offers free accommodation to pilgrims who visit Sravasti.

2. Sankasia, Place of Descent from Heaven [3, 16, 25, 26]

2.1 How to reach there

Sankasia is located in the village of **Sankisa-Basantapur** in district of Farrukhabad, Uttar Pradesh. From Agra, Sankasia is 175km via the Firozabad-Shikohabad-Mainpuri-Bewar-Pakhna route

2.1 Religious Significance

According to *Dhammapada* Commentary XIV, 2, after the Buddha had completed the rains-retreat in **Tavatimsa Heaven**, he informed Sakka Devaraja of his intention to return to earth. Thereupon, Sakka created three ladders; one of gold, one of jewels and one of silver, the tops of which rested on the summit of Mt. Sumeru and the feet of which rested against the gate of the city of Sankasia. On the right side was the golden ladder for *devas*, on the left side was the silver ladder for *Brahma* and his train, and in the middle was the jewelled ladder for the Buddha. As the Buddha descended upon the jewelled ladder, *devas* and *Brahmas* honored him by accompanying him on each side. With this retinue the Buddha descended and set foot on earth at the gate of the city of Sankasia. Because of this miraculous event, which was witnessed by a great multitude, Sankasia became an important Buddhist shrine and several *stupas* and *viharas* were erected there.

2.3 Historical Background [5, 16, 27]

King Asoka visited Sankasia as part of his itinerary of pilgrimage in 249 BC. According to Fa Hsien, Asoka built a shrine over the spot where the Buddha set foot on earth. Behind the shrine, he raised a stone column 18.3 m high with a lion capital on top and on its four sides, placed Buddha images.

Fa Hsien reported that there were about a thousand monks and nuns who all received their food from the common store, and belonged, some to the greater vehicle and some of the lesser one. He spent one *vassa* in Sankasia and described the presence of many Buddhist structures and monasteries including a *sangharama* containing 600-700 monks. When Hsüan Tsang arrived in 636 AD, there were four *sangharamas* with about 1000 priests of the Sammitiya sect. To the east of the city 20 li or so, he saw the great *sangharama* of beautiful construction, wherein lived 100 monks and religious laymen. He also saw the Asoka column 21 m high with carved figures on the four sides and around it, and mentioned the presence of some *stupas*.

Other than these accounts of the Chinese pilgrims, the history of Sankasia remained blank for the next 1200 years until **Cunningham** identified it with the village of **Sankisa-Basantapur** in Farrukhabad District of Uttar Pradesh. The present site of Sankasia is situated on a high mound and there is a chain of other mounds spread outside the village. These mounds have yielded numerous silver and copper punch marked coins during excavations, mostly tribal coins of the Panchala kings and copper coins of the Kushan rulers. Large bricks measuring 28 cm by 15 cm bearing Brahmi inscriptions of 2nd century BC were also discovered.

2.4 The Pristine Environment of Sankasia

Today Sankasia is the one of the most remote and undeveloped Buddhist shrines in India, a far cry from the Buddha's time when it was called 'City of Sankasia'. When India's **Prime Minister Nehru** was asked by some Japanese visitors in 1961, which was the poorest Buddhist shrine in India, he promptly replied: "Sankasia!" The situation has improved slightly since **Ms Mayawati**, a Buddhist laywoman became Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh in May 2007 again after a brief term in 2002-03. Now the roads are getting better and a new hotel is being built to accommodate tourists in Sankasia.

The author first visited Sankasia ten years ago. Impressed by its **pristine environment**, he decided to lead Malaysian pilgrims there

every pilgrimage despite initial objections from certain members. In the beginning, the trip would take the whole day and we would leave Sankasia by evening and travel to Kanpur or Lucknow arriving at the hotel well after midnight. When the pilgrims' hostel in the Burmese Temple was completed in 2004, **Sayadaw U Nanda** invited us to stay overnight there instead of leaving in the evening. It proved to be very pleasant as we got the opportunity to know Sayadaw U Nanda and benefit from his vast knowledge of the history of Sankasia. Now more pilgrims will get to know the rich heritage of Sankasia.

2.5 Objects of Interest [5, 16, 27]

a) Broken Asoka Column with Elephant Capital

The Elephant Capital that once surmounted the Asoka column is an important relic of the 3rd century BC. It is kept in a fenced up pavilion. Nearby under a tree, is a small shrine with a standing image of Lord Buddha, flanked by Brahma and Sakka to depict the Buddha's descent from Heaven.

b) Site where the Buddha Descended from Heaven

About 20 metres to the south of the Asokan pillar is a high mound composed of solid brickwork, which was once a Buddhist structure. This mound is 6 metres high and 49 metres in diameter at its base. Cunningham identified it with the position of the three flights of ladders by which the Buddha descended from Heaven attended by Brahma and Sakka. According to Hsüan Tsang, when the ladders by which the Buddha descended from Heaven had disappeared, the neighbouring princes built up new triple stairs of bricks and chased stones ornamented with jewels on the ancient foundation (three ladders) resembling the old ones. There was a *vihara* on the foundation and close by its side was a stone column 21m high, which was erected by Asoka-raja. After the disappearance of

Buddhism from India, the *vihara* probably followed the same fate of many other Buddhist establishments and fell into ruins. On top of the foundation now is a small shrine dedicated to a Hindu goddess Bisari Devi, built by a Hindu priest who has taken over the place sometime ago. This Hindu shrine on top of a Buddhist structure is a bone of contention between the Buddhists and Hindus in Sankasia.

According to the Press Trust of India News, during the *Pavarana* in November 2001**,** at least 18 people including three policemen were injured in clashes involving people from the two communities during a religious procession in Sankasia. The trouble began when the Hindus started to attack a group of Buddhists in the *Dhamma Yatra* (religious procession) who were chanting for the return of the site to Buddhists. The Buddhists and Hindus have always been at loggerheads over the issue of the possession of Bisari Devi temple. During the past three years, the tussle has often assumed violent overtones. Because of this incident, the Government has banned the yearly procession around the Buddhist pilgrimage site at Sankasia.

When the author visited Sankasia in November 2003, the brickworks around the mound had fallen off due to heavy rains during the last monsoon, revealing the bare earth (Plate 31) According to **Sayadaw U Nanda**, the resident monk of the Burmese *vihara*, this event may turn out to be a blessing for Buddhists because there are plans by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to carry out excavations of this ancient Buddhist site and develop it for more pilgrims to visit Sankasia. It will be interesting to see what ancient relics will be unearthed by the archaeologist's spade. For a long time, Sankasia has been by-passed by most present-day pilgrims in spite of its religious significance and the fact that it was an important shrine to the great pilgrims of the past like Asoka, Fa Hsien and Hsüan Tsang.

d) Burmese and Sri Lankan Viharas

The first Buddhist monk to reside in Sankasia was the Late Ven. **Vijaya Soma** from Sri Lanka who established a school there. It is indeed heartening to see two Buddhist monasteries now in Sankasia

in spite of its remote location. The Burmese monastery was opened in the year 2000 while the Sri Lankan monastery was built a few years earlier. Pilgrims visiting Sankasia should visit these monasteries to pay their respects to the *bhikkhus*, whose presence have enhanced the sanctity of this rural environment. They will be able to obtain more information about the history of Sankasia from the monks who have lived there for many years.

2.6 Buddhist Population around Sankasia

According to **Sayadaw U Nanda**, the resident monk of the Burmese *vihara*, when Lord Buddha descended from Heaven at the gate of Sankasia city after his 7th Vassa (about 2600 years ago) a group of Sakyan nobles came to witness the miracle and settled in Sankasia. After **Vidhadabu** attacked Kapilavatthu and massacred the Sakyans, many escaped to India and became immigrants of Sankasia (**Note 11**). Today there are over one quarter million of their descendants living in the districts around Sankasia. Every year during **Pavarana** on the full-moon day of October a great congregation of local Buddhists gather at Sankasia to commemorate this important event.

In the early 5th century AD when Fa Hsien was at Sankasia, he heard of a dispute between the Brahmins and the *Sramanas* (*Bhikkhus*) over land rights in Sankasia. According to him, the latter were losing the argument. Then both sides took an oath that if the place did indeed belong to the *Sramanas*, there should be some supernatural proof of it. When these words had been spoken, the stone lion on top of the nearby Asoka pillar gave a great roar. Witnessing this, their opponents were frightened, bowed to the decision, and withdrew. Eventually the Brahmins appeared to have succeeded in ousting the Buddhists from their lands, because by the time of Hsüan Tsang's visit, he reported: "*There were only four viharas with about one thousand monks of the Sammitiya School. There were ten Deva temples, where sectarians of all beliefs lived. They all honour and sacrifice to Mahesvara.*"

So it is very likely that at some early period, perhaps before Hsüan Tsang's visit, the Buddhists of Sankasia, many of which were immigrant Sakyans deserted their native place and settled in the surrounding villages. Many of them join the October full-moon celebration as another traditional festival of their ancestors. They are ignorant of their historical ties with the Buddhism. Sayadaw U Nanda, who is fluent in Hindi, has started a Sunday school to educate the younger generation about their roots by teaching them the history of their ancestral religion.

Note 11: Immigration of Sakyans to India

During Vidudabha's attack of Kapilavatthu, many Sakyans fled south, avoiding Kosala country, to **Sankasia** (in Uttar Pradesh) where an earlier group of their countrymen had settled after witnessing the Buddha's Descent from Heaven. This new group of refugees increased the Sakyan population in Sankasia significantly.

However, these Sakyans were not the only ones who had moved out of Kapilavatthu. According to the Mahavamsa viii, 18, soothsayers had foretold the future destruction of Kapilavatthu to **Sakka Pandu**, a cousin of the Buddha and son of **Amitodana**. With a group of followers, he went to another tract of land on the further side of the Ganges and founded a city there and ruled as king. He had seven sons and one daughter named **Baddhakaccana.** She later married the Pandyan prince **Panduvasdeva** who succeeded his uncle **King Vijaya** to the throne of Sri Lanka.

Another famous Sakyan was **Devi,** the first wife of King Asoka and mother of **Ven. Mahinda** and **Ven. Sanghamitta**. Asoka married her when he was the viceroy of Ujjayini (Ujjain). She was a devotee of the Buddha and a descendant of a Sakyan family who migrated to **Vedisa** after escaping the destruction of Kapilavatthu by Vidudabha

3. Rajgir, Place of Taming the Drunken Elephant Nalagiri

3.1 How to reach there

Rajgir is situated in the Nalanda district of Bihar, 70 km northeast of Bodhgaya and 102 km south of Patna. All distances are approximate.

3.2 Religious Significance [3, 25, 26]

Rajgir is the modern name of **Rajagaha** or "royal abode", an appropriate designation for a place that had remained as the capital of the powerful kingdom of **Magadha** for centuries. In the Buddha's time, the ruler was King **Bimbisara**, who was later usurped by his parricidal son, **Ajatasattu**. In his first meeting with the ***Bodhisatta***, Bimbisara was so impressed by his royal bearing that he offered to share his kingdom with him. The *Bodhisatta*, who had just renounced his Sakyan kingdom in search of the Deathless, declined the offer but promised to return to visit Rajgir after he had attained his goal. Soon after dispatching the *Sangha* to spread the *Dhamma* from Sarnath, the Buddha traveled to Uruvela, where he converted the Kassapa brothers and their matted-hair disciples, who all attained *Arahantship*. With this retinue of a thousand *Arahants*, the Buddha entered Rajgir where he received a warm welcome from the King. Thereupon he preached a sermon to King Bimbisra who became a Sotapanna. Next day he invited the Buddha to a meal and offered the **Bamboo Garden** (***Veluvana***) to the Buddha and the *Sangha*.

As the capital of a powerful state, Rajgir was a hive of secular and religious activities. According to the *Samannaphala Sutta*, many heretical teachers operated in Rajgir, namely: Purana Kassapa, Makkhali Gosala, Ajita Kesakambali, Pakudha Kaccayana, Nigantha Nattaputta and Sanjaya Belatthaputta. Among the disciples of

Sanjaya were two rich brahmins, **Upatissa** and **Kolita**, popularly known as **Sariputta** and **Moggallana** respectively. Both joined the *Sangha* after their conversion by the *Arahant* **Assaji**, and became the Buddha's first and second Chief Disciples. Following their conversion, many *paribbajakas* or wandering ascetics also became followers of the Buddha. Among the laity, the most notable disciples were the royal physician **Jivaka**, adopted son of Prince Abhaya; and the millionaire **Upali**, a follower of Nigantha Nattaputta, who was sent to convert the Buddha but ended up as a lay disciple instead. Thus Rajgir became an important centre of Buddhism as the fame of the Buddha spread throughout Magadha.

Rajgir was also the scene of many attempts by **Devadatta** to kill the Buddha over the leadership of the *Sangha*. First he hired archers to assassinate the Buddha, but they ended up by becoming disciples of the Buddha instead. Next, as the Buddha was walking up the slopes of Gijjhakuta (Vulture Peak) one day, Devadatta hurled a rock from the summit at the Buddha but it missed and a splinter wounded the Buddha's foot. Finally, he caused the elephant **Nalagiri** to be intoxicated with liquor and sent the ferocious beast to charge at the Buddha. But the Buddha subdued the animal with his loving kindness. Because of this miracle, Rajgir became sanctified as an important pilgrimage site. While Devadatta was plotting against the Buddha, **Ajatasattu**, at his instigation, usurped the throne and imprisoned his father in order to starve him to death. He regretted his actions too late, as his father had died before he could release him. Ajatasattu, later at the suggestion of Jivaka, sought the Buddha's advice and became a lay disciple. After the Buddha's *Mahaparinibbana*, he led an army to Kusinara to claim a share of the Buddha's relics. He was the patron of the **First Sangiti** or Council held at **Sattapanni Cave** in Rajgir.

3.3 Historical Background [5, 27, 36]

Rajgir lost its political status after Ajatasattu's son, Udayibhadda, slew his father and transferred the capital to Pataliputta. But the fact

that Asoka erected a *stupa* and a stone pillar with an elephant capital during his pilgrimage to Rajgir shows that the place remained as an important Buddhist centre for centuries. When Fa Hsien came during the fifth century, he found the old city desolate but outside the hills at Veluvana, he found a group of monks living in the monastery. When Hsüan Tsang visited Rajgir in 637-638 AD, it was practically deserted. Of the ancient monasteries and *stupas*, he found only foundation walls and ruins standing. He saw the Asoka *stupa* which was 18.3 m high and by the side of it, the Asokan pillar about 15.2 m high with an elephant capital, the Pippala stone house said to be the cave of Mahakassapa and the Sattapanni caves. He also visited Gijjhakuta and saw a brick *vihara* at the western end of the hill and several *stupas* in the vicinity.

Although there is no record of Rajgir after Hsüan Tsang's visit, the antiquities recovered from Rajgir during archaeological excavations in 1905-06 showed that it continued to be a popular Buddhist shrine up to the 12^{th} century AD. According to Fa Hsien, Ajatasattu built a new citadel outside the circle of five hills, namely: **Vebhara**, **Pandava**, **Vepulla**, **Gijjhakuta** and **Isigili**; that encircled the old Rajagaha city. The modern village of Rajgir encloses a part of this 'New Rajagaha', which was protected by a massive wall of earth resembling an irregular pentagon in shape, with a circuit of 5 km. On the south, towards the hills, one can still see the stone fortifications that once protected the old city. The wall is 4.6 m to 5.5 m thick and rises to a height of 3.4 m at some places.

3.4 Objects of Interest [5, 27, 36]

a) Veluvana (Bamboo Grove) and Karanda Tank

When King Bimbisara heard that the Buddha had come to Rajgir with a retinue of one thousand *Arahants*, he went to the Sapling Grove to meet the Buddha and was converted by the Buddha, attaining the First Stage of Sainthood. Thereafter, he invited the Buddha to his palace for the following day's meal, after which he

donated the famous Bamboo Grove or *Veluvana,* the first donation of a park (*arama*), to the Buddha and *Sangha*.

When the writer first visited Veluvana in 1991, the place was slightly overgrown with bushes and on the south side towards the hot springs, a number of Muslim tombs could be seen on a large mound to the left of the main entrance. The cemetery is believed to be the site of the **Veluvana Vihara** built by Bimbisara for the Buddha's residence. The whole area has been cleaned up and Veluvana now looks like a pleasant park, planted with shade trees, bamboo and flowers, reflecting its original status as the royal park of King Bimbisara. In the vicinity of Veluvana is a large pond with a Buddha image at the centre. This pond is believed to be the site of the **Karanda tank** mentioned in Buddhist text as the ***Karanda kanivapa*** where the Buddha used to take his bath.

b) Pipphali House

A short distance from Veluvana at the foot of **Vebhara** hill, are the hot springs of Rajgir, a popular picnic spot for bathing. A little above the hot springs, on the right side of the path uphill, is a remarkable stone structure known locally as the "**machan**" (watch tower). The structure is roughly cube-shaped with dimensions of 26 m feet long by 25 m wide by 7 m high and is built of unhewn blocks of stone set on the rock. According to **Sir John Marshall** who excavated the site in 1905-06, the structure was originally a watch-tower and "in after times, when no longer required for defensive purposes, they would afford convenient cells for ascetics to meditate in". This structure is believed to be the **Pipphali stone house**, residence of **Ven. Maha Kassapa**, Convenor of the First Council. The name 'Pipphali' probably refers to the name of Mahakassapa before he became a monk. According to *Samyutta* V, 78, the Buddha visited Maha Kassapa on one occasion when the latter was ill and expounded the Seven Factors of Enlightenment, upon hearing which, Maha Kassapa recovered from the illness. According to *Samyutta* iii, 124, **Ven. Assaji** once stayed at Pipphali House when he was sick.

c) Sattapanni caves

The **Sattapanni** caves, site of the **First Buddhist Council** held three months after the *Mahaparinibbana* in 543 BC is situated on top of **Vebhara** hill, beyond the largest Jains temple. There a narrow footpath descends some 30 m to a long artificial terrace in front of a line of six caves (might have been seven originally). The caves have been sealed off to ensure the safety of visitors. The terrace in front of the caves is about 36.6 m long and 10.4 m at the widest point and part of the retaining wall of large unhewn stones on the outer edge can still be seen. This place agrees with the description of Sattapanni found in the Pali texts where five hundred *Arahants* convened to codify the Buddha's Teaching. Over the last 2500 years, a lot of erosion would have taken place so the terrace was probably bigger in those days, to accommodate so many *Arahants*.

d) Bimbisara Jail

About 2½ km south of Veluvana beside the main road, is an area about 60 m square enclosed by the remains of a stone wall 2 m thick. This area has been identified as the prison in which Bimbisara was jailed by his son Ajatasattu, who usurped the throne. It is said that from this prison, the king could see the Buddha up in Gijjhakuta, the sight of whom provided great joy to the prisoner.

e) Jivaka's mango garden (Jivaka *ambavana*)

According to Pali sources, Jivaka's mango garden is situated between the city's East Gate and Gijjhakuta, and the site has been identified a short distance from the foot of Gijjhakuta. According to the Vinaya Texts, **Jivaka Komarabhacca** was the adopted son of **Prince Abhaya**, who found him alive (*jivati*) in a dust heap when he was an infant and raised him up. When he was old enough, he set out for Taxila to study medicine for seven years. To test his knowledge, his teacher asked him to go all round Taxila to search for any plant,

which was not medicinal and bring it back. Jivaka proved to be so proficient in medicinal plants that he returned after a long search and declared that he had not seen any plant that was not medicinal within a *yojana* (13 km) of Taxila.

Returning to Rajgir, he cured many people suffering from serious ailments and even performed surgery, something unheard of in those days. He became the leading physician and surgeon of Rajgir and earned great wealth through his medical practice. At some point in his career, he became a lay disciple and used to attend on the Buddha three times a day. When the Buddha's foot was injured by a splinter from a rock hurled by Devadatta, it was Jivaka who attended on him and healed the wound. Realizing the advantages of having a monastery near his home, Jivaka built one on his extensive mango garden and donated it to the Buddha. The site of this monastery was excavated recently, which exposed the buried foundations of elliptical buildings, possibly of monastic nature, of an early date.

f) Gijjhakuta (Vulture Peak)

Gijjhakuta hill was the favourite resort of the Buddha and the scene of many important discourses while he was in Rajgir. To reach the top, one has to climb up a long stone stairway, 6.1 m to 7.3 m wide, called the **Bimbisara road**, built by the King to enable him to reach the summit to see the Buddha. The rocky path ends near the top of the hill where one can see two natural caves, which were probably used by the **Buddha** and **Ven. Ananda**. At the summit, one can see the huge granite rock formation resembling a vulture standing with folded wing, from which the hill derived its name. Recently, a cement staircase has been constructed to facilitate the pilgrim's climb to the top, which is a flat terrace surrounded by a low retaining wall with a shrine near the precipice. This spot offers a commanding view of the valley below. It is a favourite place for pilgrims to perform puja or circumambulate while reciting the virtues of the Buddha. Near the bottom of the cement staircase are two smaller caves believed to be used by **Ven. Sariputta** and **Ven. Moggallana**.

g) Maddakucchi (Rub belly)

The Pali name ***maddakucchi***, which means "**rub belly**", was derived from a story that at this place, the queen of Bimbisara knowing that she was carrying a patricide, tried to abort the foetus by a forcible massage of her belly. Maddakucchi, which finds mention in the Pali scriptures, is situated at the base of Gijjhakuta. It is believed to be the place where the Buddha was brought by stretcher after being wounded on the leg by a splinter of a big rock hurled by Devadatta from the summit of Gijjhakuta hill. Formerly, this place contained a deer park and a monastery.

h) Burmese Monastery

The Burmese monastery standing on top of a hillock in New Rajgir was the first modern monastery established in Rajgir in 1958. Its founder was an old Theravada monk, **Sayadaw U Zayanta** who has passed away. Recently it has built a new shrine hall to enshrine a sacred Buddha relic.

3.5 Ruins of Nalanda Mahavihara

The ruins of **Nalanda Mahavihara** were first excavated in 1871 by Sir Alexander Cunningham who identified its site at the modern village of Bargaon on the basis of the accounts of the Chinese pilgrim, Hsüan Tsang. Located only 12 km from Rajgir, the ruins extend over a vast area. The structures exposed represent only a part of the vast establishment and consist of monastic sites, *stupa* sites and temple sites. Lengthwise, they extend from south to north, the monasteries on the eastern flank and temples on the west. The monasteries were all built on more or less the same plan and to-date, at least eleven monastic sites and five main temple sites have been identified. The most prominent standing structure at Nalanda is the **Sariputta *stupa***, erected in honour of the Chief Disciple, who was born and passed away in the nearby village of **Nalaka**.

4. Vesali, Place where Monkeys Offered Honey to the Buddha

4.1 How to reach there

Vesali or Vaishali is located around the village of Basarh in the Muzaffapur district of Bihar, 55 km north of Patna across the Ganges River. All distances are approximate.

4.2 Religious Significance [3, 4, 25]

Vesali or **Vaishali**, capital of the **Licchavis** or **Vajjis**, was the headquarters of the powerful Vajjian confederacy of eight clans, of whom the Licchavis and Videhans were the most important. It was the first republic in the world modelled on the *Aparihaniya Dhamma* or the seven conditions leading to welfare, which the Buddha taught to the Vajjians when he was dwelling at the Saranda shrine in Vaishali. Thus united, they became so powerful that **Ajatasattu** of Magadha had to resort to treachery by sending the brahmin **Vassakara** to sow discord among the Vajjian princes for three years in order to weaken them. By then, they were too disunited to defend their country and Ajatasattu conquered them.

The Buddha visited Vaishali several times, spending his 5th and 44th *vassas* there and many Licchavi nobles became his disciples. When Vaishali was plagued with famine, disease, and evil spirits, the Buddha was invited by the Licchavi nobles to help them alleviate the plagues. Buddha then preached the ***Ratana Sutta*** (Jewel Discourse) and instructed Ven. Ananda to go round the city walls reciting it as a Protection. Thereafter, the Buddha recited it for seven days and all the plagues then abated. But the event that elevated the status of Vaishali to an important pilgrimage site was the offering of a bowl of honey by a band of monkeys to the Blessed One, an incident mentioned among the Four Great Miracles in the Buddha's life.

At Vaishali, the Buddha allowed women to be admitted to the *Sangha* after **Ven. Ananda** successfully pleaded to the Buddha for the ordination of **Maha Pajapati Gotami** and several Sakyan ladies. The Buddha then decreed the Eight Chief Rules, in addition to the Disciplinary Code observed by monks, which *bhikkhunis* or nuns "should revere, reverence, honour and respect for life and which should not be transgressed". Thus the ***Bhikkhuni Sangha*** came to be established in Vaishali.

Once the Buddha was staying in a mango grove of **Ambapali**, the chief courtesan of Vaishali who invited him to a house *dana*, forestalling the Licchavi nobles who then offered her money in exchange for the invitation. But she politely declined their offer for she valued the *dana* more and after the meals, even donated her mango grove to the Buddha and *Sangha*. The Buddha spent the last *vassa* in Vesali where he relinquished the will to live at the Capala shrine. After the *Mahaparinibbana*, the Licchavis obtained a share of the Buddha's relics from Kusinara and erected a grand *stupa* over the holy relics in Vaishali.

Vaishali is celebrated to possess the **Buddha's alms bowl**, which he donated to them before his *Parinibbana*. An account of its journey to various places is described in the **next section (Part III, 5).**

4.3 Historical Background [5, 27, 37, 38]

After the *Mahaparinibbana*, the Vajjian confederacy was defeated by Ajatasattu, whose son Udayibhadda slew his father and moved the capital from Rajgir to Pataliputta, across the Ganges river from Vaishali. According to the Mahavamsa (Great Chronicle of Ceylon), the dynasty of Udayibhadda was succeeded by three generations of parricidal kings, namely: Anuruddha, Munda and Nagadasa who each slew his own father to take over the throne. By then, the people could not tolerate this dynasty of parricides. In the end, the minister Sisunaga, son of a Licchavi prince deposed Nagadasa. Sisunnaga was succeeded by his son, Kalasoka, and by then a hundred years had passed since the *Mahaparinibbana.*

At that time in Vaishali, many shameless *bhikkhus* of the Vajji clan were practising the **Ten Points**, which were not in conformity with the *Vinaya* or monastic rules. **Venerable Yasa** of Kosambi, while in Vaishali noticed the deviations and strongly protested against them, resulting in his expulsion by the Vajji monks. Ven. Yasa, together with other monks appealed to **Ven. Revata** of Soreyya, the chief of the *Sangha* to settle the dispute. Thereupon, the **Second Council** was convened at **Valukarama** monastery in Vaishali during the reign of King **Kalasoka** and attended by 700 *Arahants*. **Venerable Sabbakami**, the most senior *Arahant*, questioned by Ven. Revata, adjudged the Ten Points as unlawful according to the *Vinaya*.

Forty years after the Second Council, another controversy arose that would polarize the *Sangha*. According to the tradition of the Sammitiya School recorded by Bhavya, a monk named Bhadra (or Mahadeva) proposed Five Heresies questioning the nature of the Arahant. A great assembly of ten thousand, consisting of monks and laity called '*Mahasangiti*' was convened in Pataliputta with the support of the king and the majority voted in favour of these heretical views. This resulted in a schism in the *Sangha* and the secession of the *Mahasanghika*, who held a great assembly of theirs called the *Mahasangiti,* from which the sect derived its name and decided matters according to their own light. From then on, further schisms led to the formation of different sub-sects, and in the course of time, eleven sub-sects arose out of the *Theravada* while seven issued from the *Mahasanghika*, leading to the well-known **Eighteen Schools of Buddhism.**

Asoka, the Mauryan emperor who had his capital in Pataliputta near Vaishali raised a *stupa* in which he enshrined some of the Buddha's relics and erected beside it an Asokan column with a lion capital when he visited Vaishali during his pilgrimage to the holy places in 249 BC. Fa Hsien visited Vaishali around 400 AD and mentioned about the *stupas* built in its vicinity in honour of the Buddha.

According to a story in the Dhammapada Commentary, when **Ven. Ananda** reached the age of 120 years, he knew that his end was near and went from Rajgir to Vaishali, following the Buddha's example. Hearing of his intention, the citizens of Magadha and Vaishali

hurried from both directions to bid him farewell. To do justice to both sides, Ven. Ananda levitated in the air and entered into the **Samadhi of the Fire Element**, whereby the body was consumed by spontaneous combustion and reduced to ashes, which fell on both sides. So the people of each city taking half the relics returned and erected *stupas* over them.

Hsüan Tsang who came in 630 AD, described Vaishali as covering an area of 26-31 sq km but it was in ruins. He saw the *stupa* built by the Licchavi princes over their portion of the Buddha's relics from Kusinara, the Asoka *stupa* and stone pillar surmounted by a lion capital and nearby the pond dug by a band of monkeys (*Markata-hrada*) for the Buddha's use. Not far to the south were two more *stupas*; one at the site where the monkeys taking the Buddha's alms-bowl, climbed up a tree to gather honey and another at the site where the monkeys offered honey to the Blessed One. Hsüan Tsang wrote that both within and without, and all around the city of Vaishali, the sacred monuments were so numerous that it was difficult to remember them all.

After Hsüan Tsang's visit, the history of Vaishali remained blank for over twelve centuries. It lay in ruins, unknown and unheard of until the late 19^{th} century, when Cunningham identified the ruins at and around **Basarh** in Muzaffapur district of Bihar with ancient Vaishali. Today, most of the principal ruins are located in the village of **Kolhua**, about 55 km from Patna.

4.4 Objects of Interest in Vaishali[5, 24, 27]

a) Raj Vishal ka Garh, site of ancient Vesali

Basarh, 35 km southwest of Muzaffarpur, has been identified as the site of the ancient city of Vaishali. The site of the Raj Vishal ka Garh is believed to represent the citadel of Vaishali where the 7707 rajas or representatives of the Vajjian confederacy used to meet and discuss the problems of the day. The ruins consist of a large brick-

covered mound 2.5 m above the surrounding level and 1500 m in circumference with a 42.7 m moat surrounding it. Beside it is a pond, used by the Licchavi princes to take their bath. It is located about 3.2 kilometres southwest of the Asokan pillar at Kolhua.

b) Relic *Stupa* of the Licchavis

About a kilometre to the northwest of the Raj Vishal ka Garh, stands an open shelter with a dome-shaped roof. Inside it, are the remains of a *stupa*, which was originally a mud structure 25 feet in diameter with thin layers of cloddy clay. It appeared to have undergone enlargement and repairs four times, in which burnt bricks were used. The third enlargement increased its diameter to 40 feet and the fourth being in the form of a buttress supporting the third. The original mud *stupa* was a very old one, believed to be pre-Mauryan. From its primitive features and from the fact that a 2’6” trench had been driven into its core in olden times it is believed that this *stupa* is none other than the one **erected by the Licchavis** over their share of the relics of the Buddha. The trench was probably excavated by Asoka to reach the relics, some of which according to Hsüan Tsang, were left in their original position by Asoka.

In the centre of the original mud *stupa*, lying in the lowest layer of soil anciently disturbed by the trench, archaeologists in 1958 found a relic **casket of soapstone** (steatite) cracked from the pressure above. It contained one-fourth full of ashy earth, a piece of gold leaf, two glass beads, a small conch and a copper punch-marked coin. Based on the archaeological, literary and traditional evidence available, the archaeologists are of the opinion that this mud *stupa* is the one built by the Licchavis and the casket it contained most probably enshrined a portion of the **ashes of the Buddha** mixed with a lot of earth collected at his cremation. That it should be only **one-fourth full** reminds us of the statement made by Hsuan Tsang that: “*Asoka, opening the stupa took away **nine-tenths** of the relics leaving only one-tenth behind. Afterwards there was a king of the country who wished to open the stupa again but at the moment when he began to do so, the earth trembled, and he dared not proceed to open it*.”

Presently the soapstone relic casket can be viewed at Patna Museum. (Reference: The Corporeal Relics of the Buddha. Dr. A. S. Altekar, 1956. From a brochure of the Patna Museum, Patna)

c) Asokan Pillar

At Kolhua, 3.2 km northeast of the citadel of Vaishali, stands the impressive Asokan Pillar erected by Asoka 2250 years ago. It is a complete monolithic pillar of highly polished sandstone surmounted by a lion capital. The height is 6.7 m above the ground with a considerable portion sunk underground over the years. Though devoid of inscription, it appears to be a part of the line of pillars in the Muzaffarpur and Champaran districts – Lauriya Areraj, Lauriya Nandangarh, Rampurva – that Asoka erected along his pilgrimage route from Pataliputta to Lumbini during 249-250 BC. Around the Asokan Pillar at Kolhua are the ruins of many smaller brick *stupas.*

d) Asoka Stupa

Just near the Asokan pillar are the ruins of the Asoka *Stupa* seen by Hsüan Tsang. The dome-shaped mound is 4.6 m high and has a diameter of 20 m. During excavation by Cunningham, a stone casket containing some relics of the Buddha was found enshrined beneath it. This site is a conducive place to offer *puja* followed by walking or sitting meditation at the *stupa*. Most Indian tourist guides mistake this *stupa* for the Ananda *stupa* located at Hajipur. For the record all the *stupas* built by King Asoka were dedicated to the Buddha, either as relic or commemorative *stupas*.

e) Monkey's Tank (Markata-hrada)

Near the stone pillar is a tank (pond) called **Rama-kunda**, identified by Cunningham with the ancient monkey's tank dug by a colony of monkeys for the Buddha's use. It has been enlarged considerably.

4.5 Pataliputta (Patna), Venue of the Third Council [5, 38, 39]

a) Kumhrar, Site of Asokarama Park

The Kumhrar Park is located 5 km from Patna Railway Station on Kankarbagh Road in Patna, Bihar. There one can see a large pool, where 32 ancient pillars of polished sandstone were found, a specimen of which is exhibited at a nearby pavilion. Within the vicinity of the park is the site of a *vihara* of Asoka's time. This park in Patna is believed to be the venue of the **Third Buddhist Council** held in Pataliputta in the 17th year of King Asoka's reign, in around 250 BC. It was attended by one thousand *Arahants* and presided by the Venerable **Moggaliputta Tissa**. At this Council, the *Kathavatthu* or Points of Controversy, one of the seven books of the *Abhidhamma*, was compiled wherein the heretical doctrines were thoroughly examined and refuted.

The Third Council marked a turning point for Buddhism, which prior to this, was confined mainly to Magadha and neighbouring states. With King Asoka of the Mauryan Empire reigning supreme over the whole Indian sub-continent as its chief patron, the time was now ripe for expansion. Accordingly, it was decided to send competent *Arahants* to propagate the Buddha's Teachings all over India as well as **Sri Lanka** in the south, **Kashmir Gandhara** in the north, **Bengal** and **Burma** in the east and **Yonaka** and countries in the west. Each team was headed by an Elder and consisted of five monks, the quorum required to confer higher ordination in remote regions. The names of the Elders and the nine places where they were deputed are given in the **Mahavamsa**[38].

Although certain scholars have disputed the authenticity of the council by claiming that it is unrecognized and unknown to all Buddhist sources outside of the Theravada school, archeology has confirmed the **historicity** of these missions. In *Stupa* No. 2 at Sanchi near Bhopal, were found two relic caskets from the 2nd or 1st century BC, inscribed with the names of some of the missionaries. In this

way the Buddha's Teachings spread in the four directions as a result of the Dhamma missions after the Third Council shown below.

	MISSIONARIES	PLACES
1.	Majjhantika Thera	Kasmira & Gandhara[1]
2.	Mahadeva Thera	Mahimsamandala[2]
3.	Rakkhita Thera	Vanavasi[3]
4.	Yonaka Dhammarakkhita Thera	Aparantaka[4]
5.	Maha Dhammarakkhita Thera	Maharattha[5]
6.	Maha Rakkhita Thera	Yonaka[6]
7.	Majjhima Thera	Himavantapadesa[7]
8.	Sonaka and Uttara Theras	Suvannabhumi[8]
9.	Mahinda, Itthiya, Uttiya, Sambala and Bhaddasala Theras	Tambapannidipa[9]

[1]**Gandhara** comprises the districts of Peshawar & Rawalpindi in Pakistan. Kasmira is modern Kashmir.
[2]**Mahimsamandala** is generally taken as modern Mysore.
[3]**Vanavasi** was composed of coastal regions such as Kerala and Malabar.
[4]**Aparantaka** or the 'western ends' comprise the Mumbai (Bombay) region, northern Gujarat, Kachchh and Sind.
[5]**Mararattha** is modern Maharashtra.
[6]**Yonaka** (Sanskrit Yavana) together with the Kambojas means clans of foreign race in the northwest frontier included in Asoka's empire.
[7]**Himavantapadesa** is the Himalayan country.
[8]**Suvannabhumi** or 'golden land' is Bago (Pegu) and Mawlamyine (Moulmein) district in Mon state of Myanmar (Burma).
[9]**Tambapannidipa** is the island of Sri Lanka.

b) Prophecy of the Elders of the Second Council

Interestingly, an account in the **Mahavamsa** written during the sixth century AD says that Venerable Moggaliputta Tissa was a Brahma-god called Tissa in his previous existence. At the time of the Second Council, the *Arahants*, foreseeing danger to the religion in the future, approached him for help as his lifespan in the Brahma realm was coming to an end. He consented to be born in the world of men in order to prevent the downfall of the Buddha's religion.

Subsequently he was born as the son of Moggali of Pataliputta, as a Brahmin named Tissa. At a young age, he showed great intelligence by thoroughly mastering the Vedas. The Venerables Siggava and Candavajji, who were assigned to convert him, frequented his house on their alms round. For seven years they got nothing, not even a word asking them to move on. But on the eighth year, Ven. Siggava heard someone in the house saying to him: 'Go further on.' When Tissa's father Moggali saw him and asked whether he had received anything from his house, Ven. Siggava answered 'Yes'. Later when Moggali learnt what had happened, he scolded the monk for lying when the latter came on the second day.

Actually, when Ven. Siggava said that he had received something, it was true. For the last seven years no one in the house had offered him anything, not even one word. Now someone had said something to him. Impressed by his humility and patience, Moggali develop faith and became his almsfood supporter (*dayaka*). When Tissa was sixteen, Ven. Siggava intentionally sat on his seat in the house. When the angry Tissa berated him, Ven. Siggava responded by asking Tissa a question about the *Cittayamaka* from the Abhidhamma. The latter could not answer and expressed a desire to learn the Dhamma converting to Buddhism. After obtaining the consent of his parents, he joined the Sangha as Ven. Siggava's disciple, who taught him the Vinaya while Ven. Candavajji taught the Abhidhamma. He later attained Arahantship and became an acknowledged leader of the monks at Pataliputta. He became known as Moggaliputta Tissa and was instrumental in convening the Third Council and despatching Dhamma missions to various parts of the Indian sub-continent, Sri Lanka and Burma to propagate the Buddha Sasana. Subsequent events appear to confirm the **prophecy** of the *Arahants* of the Second Council.

c) Patna Museum (Closed on Mondays)

The museum at Patna, capital of Bihar where Buddhism originated, houses one of the largest collections of ancient Buddhist antiquities

in the world. The sculptures of stone and bronze on display can be divided into a few distinct periods, namely:

- **Mauryan Sculptures (4th-3rd century BC)**

On display here are Indian stone sculptures of highly polished sandstone in magnificent forms of animals such as the lion, bull and elephant capitals, fashioned for placing atop Asokan pillars. Besides these refined courtly art, an archaic religious art based on the widespread cult of tutelary deities are on display featuring the gigantic Patna yaksa (*yakkha*) and yaksi (female *yakkha*).

- **Gandhara and Mathura Buddha Images**

Prior to the beginning of the Christian era, the Buddha was never represented in human form but only by symbols. The demand for Buddha images started when the movement of 'Bhakti' or devotion gained strength among the Buddhist laity due to Mahayana influence. Buddha images came into existence in the first century **AD**, when two ancient schools of sculpture emerged separately – **Gandhara** (Afghanistan) in the far northwest of India and **Mathura** (Muttra) in the east. In **Gandhara**, the Buddha-image is represented in **Grecian style**, almost **Apollo-like** in physical beauty and even the robe is sculpted with folds characteristic of Greco-Roman sculpture. The contours are not rounded off and great pains are taken to model the human form to display the physical perfection through sharp, elegant features. In **Mathura**, the sculptures are indigenous, in the *Mahapurisa* style, large and rounded. A typical example is *Bhikkhu* Bala's image of the *Bodhisatta* in Sarnath. The treatment of the Buddha's robe is schematic and clinging, so no folds are shown and the body is revealed as though it were nude. In Patna Museum, one is able to see some rare specimens of Buddha and *Bodhisatta* images from Gandhara that survived destruction by Muslim fanatics when they conquered Northern India.

- **Gupta Period (AD 300-550)**

The Gupta period was the golden age of Indian art and the great Buddha images of Mathura, Sarnath, Ajanta and Bihar are magnificent specimens from this age. The Buddha images from Mathura during this period underwent some modifications by the Indo-Grecian art mode. There is a large collection of Buddha-images from the Gupta period in this museum for one to admire.

- **Pala Period (9th—12th century AD)**

During the Pala period, metal images became increasing popular and elegant bronze Buddha images were produced in Bihar. For stone sculptures, Nalanda in Bihar state was famous for its distinctive black slate Buddha images. In Patna Museum, there is a section showing black slate and bronze images of the Buddha and some bronze images of Tantric deities as the cult of Tantrayana, a decadent and perverse form of worship of deities unrelated to the Buddha's Teaching emerged during the Pala Period.

5. Journey of the Buddha's Alms Bowl [8, 16, 38, 42]

Vaishali is celebrated to possess the **Buddha's alms bowl**, which he donated to the Licchavis before his *Parinibbana*. According to a legend by the 5th century AD Chinese pilgrim Fa Hsien, it was at a place twelve *yojanas* (1 *yojana* = 12.8 km) southeast of Kusinara that Lord Buddha had donated his alms-bowl to the Licchavis. Earlier at Vaishali, he had announced his impending death or *Parinibbana*. The Licchavis having become overwhelmed with emotions at this news kept following him and did not want to leave him. Lord Buddha then created the illusion of a large and deeply scarped river separating them and donating his alms-bowl to them as a memorial, he exhorted them to return to their houses. On this they went back and erected a stone pillar, on which this account is engraved (Fo-Kwo-Ki, Ch. XXIV). A *stupa* was built later to commemorate that emotional event. **Kesariya**, 55 kilometres northwest of Vesali, is believed to be present day location of that event. At Kesariya, the Archeological Survey of India has recently excavated what is believed to be the tallest *stupa* in the world.

With regard to the whereabouts of the Buddha's alms bowl after Kesariya, two accounts are available, namely: that of the Chinese pilgrims who visited India from the 5th to 7th centuries AD and the other from the Mahavamsa, a Pali chronicle of Ceylon. From these accounts, several bowls have emerged, namely: the **Peshawar Bowl**, the **Kashgar Bowl**, the **Kandahar Bowl**, the **Ceylon Bowl** and the **Chinese Bowl**, the last according to **Marco Polo** was taken by **Kublai Khan** from Ceylon to China in 1284 AD.

5.1 The Peshawar Bowl and the Kashgar Bowl

The Chinese pilgrims' account of the Buddha's alms bowl begins in **Peshawar,** when Fa Hsien (Fo-Kwo-Ki Ch. XII) reported seeing the bowl when he visited **Gandhara** around **401 AD**. He related that formerly, a king of the Yue-chi after having conquered Gandhara wanted to carry off the alms bowl. He set it on an elephant, but the

elephant fell under its weight. Then he built a carriage and harnessed in it eight elephants, but the car stood fast. The time for moving the bowl had not come, so the king repented by building a *stupa* and *vihara* for ceremonial worship of the relic. This *vihara* had 700 priests who would bring out the alms bowl every day at lunchtime for devotees to make offerings.

Fa Hsien described that it was of mixed colour but chiefly black, capable of holding **two pecks or more** ('peck' is a dry measure of 10 pints or 5.7 litres). The four divisions were clear, each being about a fifth inch thick. (**Note:** According to Vinaya Mv. Kh. I, when the merchants **Tapussa** and **Bhallika** offered rice cake and honey to the Buddha at the foot of the Rajayattana tree at the end of the seventh week after Enlightenment, the Buddha thought: "*Perfect Ones do not accept in their hands. In what should I receive the rice cake and honey*? Then the Four Heavenly Kings of *Catumaharajika*, aware of the Blessed One's thought, brought four crystal bowls from the four quarters. These four bowls were moulded together to form a new crystal bowl with four divisions at the rim.)

Fa Hsien says nothing about how the alms-bowl ended up in Gandhara. But the Tibetan historian **Taranatha** observes that: "the king of the **Yueh-chih** (Kushana) invaded Magadha and carried off the alms bowl and **Asvaghosa**." **Cunningham** is of the opinion that it was the Kushan king **Kanishka** (ruled 78-102 AD) who invaded Magadha and took the alms-bowl to **Peshawar** around the 1st or 2nd century AD. While in Varanasi, the philosopher Asvaghosa saw the city conquered by the Kushan emperor Kanishka. A huge war indemnity was demanded and to appease the Buddhist conqueror, the **ruler of Varanasi** handed over the alms bowl of the Buddha as a symbolic gesture. Asvaghosa probably accompanied Kanishka back to Peshawar to serve as spiritual advisor in his court.

Mention is made here about later accounts that place the location of Buddha's alms bowl at **Kashgar around AD 400**. The biography of **Kumarajiva** records a visit of this Buddhist savant to Kashgar about AD 400 and specially mentions that he placed on his head the Buddha's alms bowl (*patra*), which is believed to possess the miraculous quality of changing its weight. Another Chinese monk

Chih Meng who went to India via Lop Nor and Khotan in **AD 404** witnessed the same miracle when handling the Buddha's alms bowl, which was shown to him at Kashgar where he also saw the Buddha's **spittoon** made of stone of variegated colour (see Ref. 42 & 43).

However, Fa Hsien who visited Kashgar around AD 400 to attend the great five-yearly assembly mentioned only the **spittoon but not the alms bowl**, which he saw in Peshawar later. While we thus find Fa Hsien's account of the sacred spittoon in full accord with Chih-meng's above-quoted description, there yet arises the question why Fa Hsien at Kashgar did not mention the alms-bowl, which both Chih Meng and Kumarajiva, within a few years of his visit, had seen at Kashgar.

There are two possibilities: (1) Fa-hsien, too, may well have seen the alms bowl shown at Kashgar. But as he later at Peshawar saw that sacred relic in a specimen which, from the antiquity of the legends attaching to it and the magnificence of the enshrining monastery, must have appeared to him the only authentic one, he probably chose to remain silent about the Kashgar bowl, raising the possibility that **there were two bowls which claimed to be the Buddha's alms bowl** at that time. (2) The second possibility is that the same alms bowl that Fa Hsien saw in Peshawar was transferred to Kashgar around the time of Kumarajiva and Chih Meng. This seems unlikely, as no monastery would wish to part with such a sacred object.

In 520 AD, the Chinese pilgrims **Sun Yung** and **Hui Seng** visited Gandhara but did not mention anything about the alms bowl indicating that it had been removed from Gandhara before their visit. This removal probably took place before the whole region fell to the Yethas or Hepthalites under **Laelih** (Kitolo) around **AD 425-450**. Sun Yung who crossed the Pamirs at **Tashkurgan** into Wakhan found the Hepthalites to be in unbroken power and states that two generations had passed since **Laelih**, the persecutor of Buddhism, had been set up as the king of Gandhara. The bowl was probably carried off by the people of Gandhara who emigrated west and settled by the banks of the **Arghanadab River** in ancient **Arachosia** (**Afghanistan**) where they founded a city named after their old country Gandhara, which still exists today as **Kandahar**.

5.2 The Kandahar Bowl

Mention is made of the alms bowl again when Hsüan Tsang visited Gandhara around AD 640. He saw the ruins of the *stupa* of the *patra* of Buddha and stated that: "*in traversing different countries, the alms bowl has now come to Persia.*" Cunningham (Ancient Geography of India, 17 note 2) identifies this Persian bowl with the Kandahar bowl. He explains Hsüan Tsang's statement by the fact that in his time Kandahar belonged to Persia.

The Kandahar bowl has long been a famous object of worship. It was seen in a thick clump of ash and mulberry trees to the east of old Kandahar in an obscure little Mahammadan shrine. The trunk of the tree under which the bowl stood was studded with hundreds of iron nails and twigs representing cures for toothache. In 1878-1880, the Kandahar bowl was seen and described by **Dr. Bellew** and **Major Le Messurier** (Dr. Bellew's Indus to the Tigris, 143; Major Le Messurier's Kandahar in 1879, 223, 225). According to them the bowl is of hard compact black porphyry, which rings when struck. It is round, about four feet wide and two feet deep, with sides about four inches thick. The lip has twenty-four facets each about seven inches wide. From the bottom of the bowl scrolls radiate to near the rim, where, on the inside, is a Persian inscription and on the outside are four lines in **Arabic characters**.

The capacity of the bowl is **eighty gallons** and its weight about three-quarter ton. Major LeMessurier's detailed measurements (outer diameter 4' 2", inner diameter 3' 7¼", inside depth 2' 3") so closely correspond with General Cunningham's measurements (4½' in diameter and 2½ deep) of a stone bowl at **Bhilsa** (Vedisa near Sanchi), as to suggest that like the Bhilsa bowl the Kandahar bowl may originally have been a tree pot. Sir **Olaf Caroe** the Governor of the North West Frontier Province from 1946 to 1947 reported it to be at Kabul Museum. The present status of this bowl is unknown. The great difference of size between the **Peshawar bowl** (2.5 gals.) and the **Kandahar bowl** (80 gals.) means that they are not the same bowl. Both bowls are obviously too big for a human being to use and may be ruled out as the Buddha's alms bowl.

5.3 The Ceylon Bowl

Another account of Buddha's alms bowl is given in the Mahavamsa, a 6th century AD chronicle of Ceylon written by Ven. Mahanama. After Ven. Mahinda had converted the Ceylonese king Devanampiya Tissa to Buddhism, he made known to the king his wish for a *stupa* to be built for the worship of the Buddha's relics. According to Mahavamsa Ch. XVII, the samanera Sumana was sent to Pataliputta in India to ask for the **Buddha's corporeal relics and alms bowl** from King Asoka. Thereafter the alms bowl with the corporeal relics was brought to Sri Lanka. The relics were enshrined in *stupas* at Anuradhapura but the alms-bowl of the Buddha or *Pātradhātu* was kept within the palace itself.

During the reign of **Vattagamini Abhaya** (104-88BC) a young brahman named Tissa started a rebellion. This was followed by the invasion of seven Tamil warriors who defeated the king and ruled the country for fifteen years. Of the seven Tamils, one married a local princess and returned home. Another took the alms bowl that was in Anuradhapura and also returned to India 'well contented'.

The fate of the alms bowl remained unknown for 500 years until the reign of **King Upatissa** (365-406 AD) who exhibited it in public for the purpose of warding off misfortune that had struck the country. According to Mahavamsa (19.ch. 37. v. 189-198):

"*He made an image wholly of gold of the departed Buddha, laid the **stone alms bowl of the Master** (filled) with water in the hollow of its hands and placed this figure on a great chariot He took upon himself and duties of a moral life and made the people also take them on themselves, he instituted a great almsgiving and established security (of life) for all living creatures. Then the bhikkhus who gathered there reciting the Ratana-Sutta and pouring out water, walked about the street, not far from the royal palace, near the wall, round which they walked with their right side towards it in the three watches of the night. When morning dawned a great cloud poured rain on the earth and all who had suffered from disease, held refreshed, high festival.*"

From the beginning of the twelfth century down to the reign **Parakramabahu IV** at the very end of 13th century AD, the alms bowl was always mentioned together with the **Sacred Tooth Relic** because they were the symbols of state, the possession of which were vital to the kings. After Parakramabahu IV, who reigned about A.D.1300, no further mention is made of the alms bowl. Apparently towards the end of the 13th century AD, it was taken from Ceylon to China at the request of the great Mongol Emperor Kublai Khan.

5.4 Kublai Khan and the Chinese Bowl

According to Marco Polo, in **1284 AD** Kublai Khan sent a mission to Ceylon to negotiate the purchase of the **Sacred Tooth, Hair and Bowl Relics.** As the Mongols were reputed to be fierce warriors (Tibet had succumbed while the Burmese were defeated in Pagan earlier in AD 1277), the Ceylonese king was faced with the dilemma of parting with the state treasures or earning the displeasure of the Great Khan. It is said that in order to please the Chinese Emperor, he dispatched two fake tooth relics, which were graciously received by the Emperor who established ritual worship of the objects. The **Ceylon alms bowl** was taken to China and Marco Polo (1290) who saw the bowl describes as of very **beautiful green porphyry** (rock with crystals embedded) while a Chinese writer **Wang Ta-Yuan** (1349) noted that it rang like glass when struck.

The whole episode is narrated in the Travels of Marco Polo, Volume 2 by **Marco Polo** and **Rustichello of Pisa** and reproduced below:

"*Now it befell that the Great Kaan heard how on that mountain there was the sepulchre of our first father Adam, and that some of his hair and of his teeth, and the dish from which he used to eat, were still preserved there. So he thought he would get hold of them somehow or another, and despatched a great embassy for the purpose, in the year of Christ, **1284**. The ambassadors, with a great company, travelled on by sea and by land until they arrived at the island of Seilan (Ceylon), and presented themselves before the king.*

And they were so urgent with him that they succeeded in getting ***two of the grinder teeth (molars)****, which were passing great and thick; and they also got some of the* ***hair****, and the* ***dish*** *from which that personage used to eat, which is of a* ***very beautiful green porphyry****. And when the Great Kaan's ambassadors had attained the object for which they had come they were greatly rejoiced, and returned to their lord. And when they drew near to the great city of* ***Cambaluc (Kaanbalik*** *– City of the Kaan or Beijing), where the Great Kaan was staying, they sent him word that they had brought back that for which he had sent them. On learning this, the Great Kaan was passing glad, and ordered all the ecclesiastics and others to go forth to meet these reliques, which he was led to believe were those of Adam. And why should I make a long story of it? In sooth, the whole population of Cambaluc went forth to meet those reliques, and the ecclesiastics took them over and carried them to the Great Kaan, who received them with* ***great joy and reverence****. And they find it written in their Scriptures that the virtue of that dish is such that if* ***food for one man be put therein it shall become enough for five men****: and the Great Kaan averred that he had proved the thing and found that it was really true."*

This account of Marco Polo provides the last known whereabouts of the alms bowl. It is corroborated by a Chinese record entitled '**Tao-i-chih-lueh** (A Description of the Barbarian Islands) written in **1349** by **Wang Ta-Yuan** who mentions the dispatch of ambassadors to Ceylon under the Yuan dynasty on three occasions to negotiate the purchase of Buddha's sacred alms bowl, which was part of Ceylon's collection of relics. However as the transfer of the alms bowl took place 65 years earlier, his description of it was **probably based on what he saw in Beijing** rather than in Ceylon itself.

"*Opposite the altar of the Buddha was placed a great alms bowl made of a substance that was neither jade nor copper nor iron. It was crimson in colour and luminous, and* ***when struck it rang like glass****. So at the beginning of this dynasty (Yuan) ambassadors were dispatched on three separate occasions to bring it back. The bowl placed before statues of Buddha contained an offering of food or water. There was one in front of each statue and they were not considered relics*."

Coming to present times, situated at No.171, Fuchengmennei Street in Beijing's Xicheng District is the **Miaoying Temple.** First built in 1096 during the Liao Dynasty, it was considerably expanded and elaborately redecorated in 1271 during the reign of Emperor Shizu (**Kublai Khan**) of Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368). In order to strengthen his relationship with the Lamaist rulers of Tibet and to gain the support of Tibetan Buddhists among his Yuan officials, Kublai Khan granted imperial permission to build the **White Dagoba** in the temple grounds in 1279. Simultaneously he renovated and renamed the temple **'The Emperor's Longevity and Peace Temple'** (*Dashengshou Wan'an Si*). Significantly the timing of these construction works coincided with the acquisition of the relics from Ceylon. So it is very likely that they were done to provide an **imperial shrine** for the worship of these sacred objects.

The temple was burnt to the ground in 1368, the year the Chinese under **Zhu Yuanzhang** drove the Mongols out of China. Amazingly only the White Dagoba remained standing. Zhu Yuanzhang founded the **Ming Dynasty** (1368-1644) and moved his capital to **Nanjing**. In 1420 the third Ming emperor **Yongle** moved the capital back to Beijing and in 1457, Emperor **Tianshun** rebuilt the temple, giving it the present name **Miaoying Si** (Divine Retribution Temple).

The **Tangshan** earthquake in 1976 caused severe damage to the temple buildings. The top of the **White Dagoba** tilted to one side, bricks and mortar in the neck supporting the cupola crumbled off, and the main trunk cracked in several places. Four boxes containing numerous Buddhist artifacts hidden inside the roof of the Dagoba were discovered, which are now displayed at the Temple. (**Ref:** Miaoying Monastery in www.china.org.cn/english/features/Beijing /31155.htm). Unfortunately nothing is said or known about the whereabouts of the Buddha's **alms bowl** and other relics, which **Kublai Khan** brought from Ceylon. They were **probably lost or destroyed** in the 1368 fire during the fierce fighting between the Mongols and Ming forces.